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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON. — September 24, 1951 DATE

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SUBJECT: **Fortnightly Review - September 9 to September 22, 1951**

POLITICAL

Eve-of-Election Statements

On September 22, 1951, there appeared in the press various eve-of-election statements by political leaders looking toward the final elections in all of the provinces of the Western Provinces, except Benin and Lagos, on September 24, 1951, of 72 representatives to the new Western House of Assembly. These statements obviously urge the populace to vote "the right way". The elections in Benin were postponed because of internal political disorders, and those in Lagos will be held later. For the first time a prominent political party, the Action Group, has named its candidates publicly.

The first general elections in Nigeria are nearing completion in the Western Provinces and in most districts they have been peaceful and orderly, but in some areas there have been disturbances, looting, and rioting. In pre-election statements both of the major political parties claim that complete victory will be theirs. The true story will be out, however, when the results of today's election are known.

Elections Postponed in Benin Division

Because of an outbreak of violence, with several hundred arrests during the past few weeks, the Governor has signed an order postponing intermediate and final elections in the Benin Division, of the Western Region. If the trouble is not cleared up shortly, it is possible that the new Western House of Assembly and the central House of Representatives will meet without Benin representation.

Riot in Okenne

Civil disturbances in the form of rioting took place in the town of Okenne in middle September reportedly because of

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dissatisfaction with the electoral results in the area at the primary stage. Secondary causes seem to have been a long standing disagreement between the sole Native Authority, the Atta of Igbira, and the Igbira Tribal Union over problems of taxation, transport and alleged maltreatment of the members of the union by local police.

Communist Activity

It is the concensus that the communist movement has steadily lost ground during the past year, the reported principal reason being that various important organization leaders, who are avowed communists or suspected of being, have been publicly discredited because of their tendency to make personal gain from their positions in organizations. An example is Nduka Eze, now being tried for fraud.

The Case of Nduka Eze, cont.

In the court case now in progress concerning pro-communist and former labor leader, Nduka Eze, who has been charged with fraud, the judge hearing this case committed him for trial in the December Assizes in Lagos. This was appealed by counsel for the defendant, but there have been no further announcements to date.

ECONOMIC

Weather and Crops

In August rainfall was above the average and evenly distributed, and general weather conditions were favorable to crops. In most areas there has been little change of late in market prices of foodstuffs.

The Timber Trade Boom

The increasing demand for Nigerian timber in recent times has opened up a lucrative trade for local logs and lumber of various types, particularly in Europe. However, one exporter stated today that the market had begun to show signs of slowing up.

Production and Distribution of Oil Palm Seedlings

Apart from food crops the most important crop in the Eastern Region is the produce of the oil palm. It is the economic backbone of the Eastern Region. In 1950, 177,000 tons of kernels and 144,000 tons of palm oil were graded for export. The great bulk of this production is from the wild palm groves

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scattered throughout most of the region and processed by time-honored native methods. The majority of palms in the Oil Palm belt are 40,50 or 60 years old and long past their best. (The yield of an oil palm begins to fall off after about 20 years).

The Agriculture Department has established an organization to help the industry, and the research work is centered at the West African Institute of Oil Palm Research, Benin, and a new substation is being opened up at Abak for the Eastern Region. At the research station the Department studies by means of experiments, problems of cultivation from the germination of seed, through the nursery, to establishment and after-cultivation in the field.

Loan for Development of Nigeria

Announcement of a loan in connection with the "Nigerian Government's Development and Welfare Program" to be floated in London, bearing interest at 3½% redeemable in 15 years, has aroused some Nigerian criticism. It was contended that the loan, amounting to £6,500,000, could have been raised in Nigeria, presumably at the same rate of interest and concurrently with the projected loan of £20,000,000 to be floated in Nigeria proper.

Fertilizer Scheme for East

The Eastern Regional Production Development Board, aware of the necessity to produce more food in the Eastern Provinces, has sponsored and financed one of the more progressive schemes in the Region. It is planned to import and distribute specially mixed fertilizers on a fairly large scale, to farmers. While the latter will pay for these manures, the cost will in no way be prohibitive. Already there is evidence that the farmers will gladly avail themselves of the opportunity to improve their land and produce larger crops.

Over a number of years the Agricultural Department has experimented with artificial manures. The results are reported to have been satisfactory, hence this undertaking.

Possible New Industry for Nigeria

The Shell D'Arcy Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria, Limited, started to sink its first test well at Ihuo (Ikedwin) on September 20, 1951. This represents a milestone in the long and patient search for oil which started fourteen years ago and which has been going on ever since except during war years. If the effort is successful, it will provide a new and most important industry to Nigeria.

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LABOR

Nigerian Labor Congress Severs Relations With WFTU

The NLC has severed its connection with the communist-dominated WFTU, but it was revealed at the same time that it did not plan to affiliate with the ICFTU or any other international trade union organizations.

The Congress affiliated with the WFTU about two years ago when it was being led by NDUKA EZE, the pro-communist labor leader recently convicted of passport forgery, and now being tried for fraud.

Before then, the defunct Trade Union Congress of Nigeria and the Nigerian National Federation of Labor from which the Labor Congress took over were only connected with the WFTU but NOT formally affiliated to it. During the period of affiliation, the WFTU sent literature to the Congress. Sometime this year, it was reported that the WFTU sent to the Congress over £2,000 for re-organization and promotion of a workers' newspaper. Late last year the Congress supported the unsuccessful country-wide strike of mercantile workers. Thousands of workers lost their jobs as a result of the strike.

Many trade unions have refused to affiliate to the Congress because of its connection with the World Federation of Trade Unions. Informed trade union circles in Lagos believe that this decision of the Congress to break away from the WFTU will mark the beginning of a more responsible and constructive approach to trade union problems in the country. It is understood that a splinter group within the Congress, headed by Mr. Mehru Ikoro, who attended a communist-sponsored rally in Europe last year, is opposed to the decision to take the Congress out of the WFTU.

Union Considers Strike

The Public Utility Technical and General Workers Union has set October 7, 1951, as the deadline after which the union "may resort to other courses to get redress", and has threatened a serious labor situation. The complaint has to do with low wages paid to laborers.

OTHER

Housing

Housing conditions become worse daily in Lagos, and the Lagos Town Council is looking into the matter. The Central Government apparently has no well-defined plan to bring immediate relief.

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New Newspaper to Begin Publication

A new daily newspaper, The Nigerian People's Voice, will make its maiden appearance in Lagos, October 1. The paper which will be the organ of the Nigerian People's Congress is being sponsored by the President of that political party, Mr. H. O. Davies. It will be edited and printed in Lagos but is expected to have correspondents and sales agents throughout the country. The publication of a party organ reflecting more or less "working class" sympathies has been Mr. Davies' plan for some time. He is no novice in the newspaper business, having founded the Daily Service but later having broken with the Nigerian Youth Movement and Action Group political interests it represents. His party, the NPC, calls itself the party of the common man. Mr. Davies is presently interviewing applicants for editorial positions on the paper.

School Standards in North to be Raised

The Director of Education for Nigeria has accepted the recommendations of the five-man committee set up to investigate the comparative standard of education in the Northern and Southern schools. It is believed that the report will lead to action establishing a parallel standard of education in the Muslim North and the non-Muslim South. According to the report there is presently a large gap between the education standards in the two areas, those in the South being substantially higher. The Northern Regional Director of Education will submit to the Director of Education and the Chief Commissioner, Northern Region, proposals for the readaptation of the educational system establishing parallel standards. It is believed that establishment of parallel educational standards will in time help increase cultural understanding between the Regions.

Census of Nigeria to be Taken

A census of Nigeria is to be taken in three stages over a period of one year beginning in July, 1952. The last general census was taken in 1931 and was quite inadequate. A full census of Lagos Township was successfully taken in 1950. The census will be conducted by the Department of Statistics, and the information to be collected will include particulars of sex, age, (in five groups), tribe or nationality, occupation (in six groups), literacy, education, and religion.

Visit of Mr. Thomas C. Denton

This gentleman, Chief of the African Division of the United States Bureau of Mines, spent two days here during the period to obtain data on principal mineral operations in Nigeria, and to

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discuss mineral reporting by this office. He conferred with Government authorities here.

A. W. Childs
Consul General

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